

AUG 3 1966

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Send Helms Home

The Senate understandably got nettled when the new CIA Director, Richard Helms, blossomed out as a published author. His letter praising the editor of the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat* for attacking Senator Fulbright was an incredible breach of protocol. Senators are fussy about protocol. Even the Senators who opposed Fulbright's attempt to cripple the CIA rose to defend their colleague. Demands for the resignation of Helms have followed.

The tempers boiled out of a pot that already was seething with pointed accusations and parliamentary maneuvering over the CIA debate. The *Globe-Democrat* had written an editorial praising the secret, closed session which the Senate held on July 14. All that was known of that debate was the vote, 61-28, to sidetrack the move to pack the CIA watchdog committee with liberals. On July 27, the *Globe-Democrat* printed Helm's laudatory letter. And as luck would have it, July 27 was the same day that the *Congressional Record* published a heavily censored version of the proceedings of the secret session.

A reading of this record, even in its mutilated state, shows that the esteemed colleagues of the Senate were at one another's throats. The debate turned entirely on the rules. All legislation relating to the CIA is supposed to be reported out of the conservative Armed Services Committee; but the resolution to pack the CIA watchdog

was reported out by Fulbright's Foreign Relations Committee. The opponents were determined to send the resolution back to the Armed Services Committee where it belonged—and where everyone tacitly assumed it would die a natural death. There were hints that certain Senators were being unreasonable, and that others couldn't be trusted to keep CIA secrets. Instead of the half-hour debate planned, the recriminations stretched out for four hours, ending with several Senators shouting, "Vote! Vote!"

Unlike other executive agencies, the CIA is totally under the direction of the National Security Council. In effect, it operates out of the White House—one reason why Fulbright is so anxious to curb its activities. But at the same time the CIA supplies the White House with much of the information that is the basis of national decision making. Thus the personality and bias of the CIA director and his staff can have a strong influence on the President's policies.

When Admiral Raborn was appointed CIA director a year ago, with Helms as his deputy, we predicted that Helms would soon be running the Agency. After 20 years of service, he held the CIA bureaucracy in his hand; Admiral Raborn was easily outmaneuvered. But a specialist in bureaucratic politics can be amazingly ignorant of real politics. Helms's blunder is not entirely unexpected. It may be the perfect excuse to send Helms home.